

Icy Echoes

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Icy Echoes

by [Ysavvryl](#)

Summary

The echoes of strange songs can be heard in arctic waters.

While Naija had brought the power of sunlight to these cold depths, darkness still encroached on her magic. It was a place of nightmares. Thorns as large as she was lined the walls of the narrow passages. When other lights appeared, she knew to be wary. Those were the lures of giant predators that would close in rapidly and presumably tear her apart for food. She'd seen those sharp teeth once and decided to keep away from any of those drifting lights.

She could simply burn them to nothing with her Energy form. It would be quite a battle, flames soaring through the abyssal dark after the giant predator, burning it into delicious fish steaks that could feed her for a week. But no, that would be a dangerous waste of time. Those lure fish were tough. If she got lost to those aggressive passions here, she might not find a place to recover in these depths. Restful calm was hard to come by here.

But what lay in this dark place? What was past the winding passages? Where did this path go and would she find anyone at the end of it? All through her wanderings, those questions had driven her on. Even to this place, and one of these passages had to go somewhere. She didn't know how large the world was; she hoped to find out.

Swimming past the ethereal blue creatures that seemed like they shouldn't exist, Naija felt a colder current coming from further down. Wonderful, there should be a new place ahead! Currents that felt or smelled different from the local area were good hints for places to explore. Going around a thorny boulder, she spotted a soft blue glow below. It was a welcome change from this dark maze.

The passage she entered was lit up enough that she could change to her normal form. But it was even colder than the thorny darkness. Especially around giant translucent boulders that floated and spun. They were like the crystals, except that it felt like she could hurt her fingers with the cold if she touched them too long.

...ice. Those weren't boulders, but a form water took when it was cold enough. But not even the abyss was cold enough for ice? It was a strange wonder. What could she do with ice in cooking?

As Naija swam through the icy tunnels, something became apparent. There weren't any other creatures down here. Was it too cold for them? She wouldn't want to live here herself. But there was a beauty to this ice drifting in cold waters. It didn't appear anywhere else in Aquaria that she had found.

The tunnel began rising, taking her farther from the dark abyss. The blue light grew stronger until beams appeared in the water. Sunlight? In this cold place? Naija had thought the sun was always warm. She also spotted other signs of life, schools of strange fish adapted to the cold. When she nabbed one to make a hand roll out of, it had more fat than she was used to. It was tender and tasty.

The walls moved apart and the expanse of water became immense. It was exactly like the mysterious veil where water gave way to air. Maybe she had gone to the other end of the world to have found another veil. Maybe there were some unique treasures around here. While she would need to keep moving to not get cold, Naija was eager to see what this place would hold. Maybe even a unique people, able to live in these frigid waters like the fish.

In the still silent waters, the sounds of song carried far. But it was unlike the Verse, with notes that she'd never heard before. A new song? What kind of being could create a new song with new notes? This could be what she was searching for, a people that were still alive and good! Naija smiled as she followed the song. What could they be like, thriving in this place? There were so many questions to ask, so much that she could figure out.

She found the singers close to the veil's divide, playfully swimming in the surface waves. They were nothing like the peoples she saw in visions of the past: no legs, different eyes, fins like the fish, thick gray skin that seemed well suited to this place, long snouts instead of noses. And there was something strange about them, a feeling of difference. They were out of place in Aquaria. "What song do you sing?" Naija asked.

"Songs of heroes of the great waters," one of them replied, the voice warm and gentle in her mind. "Hello, stranger, we hope the waters are kind to you. Want to sing with us?"

"I'm afraid I don't know the notes you're using," Naija said. "I thought all songs were derived from the Verse, but your song just now isn't like it."

"That is..." he seemed uncertain.

Another of the gray swimmers came closer. "This time, I think it is fine to explain," she said. "This Verse and this world are curious things."

"This world?" Naija asked in wonder. These creatures weren't from Aquaria? No wonder they looked so different.

The male singer slowed and waved a fin at her. "It is not our own, yes. We are dolphins of Earth, seeking the secrets of time and space. In our research, our pod ended up here. We've been trying to craft water tubes to connect the parts of this world that are most suitable for us, but our songs have trouble crafting more than spheres here."

"All songs have power from the Verse, that is how I know things," she told the dolphins. Then she wonder if she was being rude. "Oh, I am Naija. I apologize, I have encountered only one other I could speak with. Aquaria has seen better days."

"No offense taken," the female dolphin said.

"We've notice that," the male dolphin said. "We must stay near the surface to breathe, but we have seen evidence of once great civilizations. It is a strange world, unlike others we have visited. Also, there has been a mysterious song following us, echoes of which seem everywhere."

"Yes, even here in the arctic drifts," the female said. "Do you know the true form of this world's Verse? It would give us insight into how to better make our passages and get back home."

Naija nodded. "Of course, the Verse flows within every current and every being." Except for these dolphins, she realized, because they weren't of Aquaria. But they seemed friendly, even offering to sing with her. Naija sung the Verse itself for them. No matter where she was or what was going on, the Verse itself was comforting.

"That song feels like a mother's love," the female dolphin said. "It is beautiful."

"We should be able to adapt our powers to that song," the male said. "Those eight are the only notes you know?"

"Yes, all of my powers come from using those eight notes," Naija said.

He brushed by her with his fin, some kind of gesture. "It is a pity, there is so much more to song with a greater range. There are many songs in our world."

A whole other world... "Could I come see your world?" Naija asked.

"If you are alone here, I don't see why not," the male dolphin said. "Loneliness is a terrible thing for an intelligent being. There are no creatures like you in our home waters, but there are us dolphins and

the whales that could be your friends."

No! You belong to me. Come to me.

There was a fight in her heart. She wanted to go: what might she see in another world, how many songs could she learn? But there was a deep rooted feeling that she belonged in Aquaria and could not leave. She wanted to find out more about the shadowy woman who always seemed to be just ahead of her. There was also what Mithalas had said: she would unite all of Aquaria and find love. Even if they were kind, she doubted that she'd do that by leaving with the dolphins. There had to be someone else.

"On second thought, I'd better not," Naija said. "I have things to do here."

"That's fine, it would take us some time to set up the passage back to Earth," the female dolphin said. "We can still teach you some of our songs, Naija."

That was a happiness to make up for the disappointment of not seeing another world. "Yes, that would be wonderful!"

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